

# Replacing divots on tees: British views are sought by American eager to learn

This letter is to enquire about the opinion of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association on the subject of replacing divots on tees covered by cool-season grass (normally, I suppose, either creeping bent, Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass). The subject seems to be one of increasing disagreement. Some will argue that golfers should replace divots on tees to relieve the workload for the greenkeeper. Personally I have always understood that one should not replace divots on tees, since this only leads to loose and inconsistent turf texture, slow play and unsatisfactory recovery results due to the frequent scattering of divots.

In my experience, I have found two general approaches to maintenance of tees: One is the placement of soil-seed mixture in divot marks, carried out in accordance to, and immediately following the changing of the tee-markers (on a daily to weekly basis, depending on the ambitions and budget of the club). The other is hand plugging with fresh sod from the greenkeepers' turf nursery (if he has one), also carried out after the tee markers have been shifted. However, the art and science of greenkeeping is a dynamic affair, and there may well be a new order of the day, so to speak. As a non-greenkeeper, I can therefore only hope to be aware and appreciative of the new and improved techniques. I shall be looking forward to hearing from you.

**James H Duncan MSc (Civ Eng), 106 1/2 Linn Street, ITHACA, NY 14850, USA**

## 'Illogical' ideas need clarification

Apropos the article on the link between phosphatic fertilisers and annual meadow grass invasion of bent/fescue turf, it does seem to me that the illogicality of Mr Laycock's views and

## Comparisons make me think again about temporary greens and trolleys

I would like to congratulate you on the article comparing Middlesbrough Municipal Golf Centre with its 80,000 rounds of golf a year and Royal Worlington Golf Club, with its 350 (some very part time) members. It was extremely interesting to read how the two Head Greenkeepers manage their courses with their different soil conditions and play conditions.

However, as a greenkeeper at a private club where members have come to expect all year round golf, I feel I would like to raise two observations from the article. We are situated on the Chiltern Uplands on a soil classed as Pebbly Clay. Although free draining during periods of excessive rainfall, I am very aware that the soil is open to compaction.

I have been lucky enough to have played Royal Worlington and have to agree that it is an outstanding test of golf, with free draining firm and very true putting surfaces.

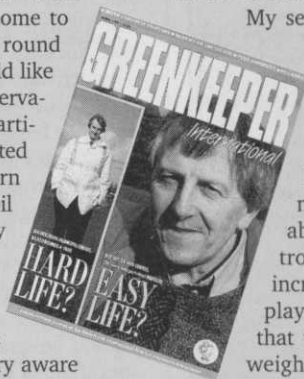
However, I feel the comment, "There should not be temporary greens anywhere in this country because the weather is not that bad. If you look after the greens in the summer, you will not need temporary greens in the winter", is slightly unfair to green-

keepers in this country who need to use temporary greens. In the article it states that Royal Worlington is built on a superb parcel of land with a sandy loam soil. For this reason and the fact that Royal Worlington only has 350 members (many of whom only play once or twice a year), I can understand why Mr Gee does not need to use temporary greens. However, some of us are not as lucky as he.

My second point concerns trolley restrictions during winter months. On some courses it has become a necessity to be able to restrict trolleys because of increased winter play. I totally agree that there is as much weight on the bottom of a trolley as there is on the bottom of a pair of feet. However golfers with trolleys will navigate a very similar path, leading to worn turf surfaces and compacted soils.

We all realise from first hand experience that golf is now more popular than ever before, and courses are expected to be presented to higher and higher standards. Only with the use of temporary holes and trolley restrictions can some courses achieve this.

**G Bruce, Head Greenkeeper, Berkhamsted Golf Club**



Research then) and long before that old greenkeepers were noting the adverse effect of agricultural fertilisers, including basis slag, applied to feed the sheep on the course. Their stand-by was soot, a purely nitrogenous 'fertiliser'. Certainly immediately after the war, my colleagues and I at St Ives Research Station were advising as standard practice ammonia, blood, hoof and horn and iron – and that was only echoing what was standard practice, on links courses anyway, before the war. Are we to dismiss the proven soundness of advice and practice over a century, merely to further the gimmick of frequently repeated chemical soil analyses, which at best merely confirm what an experienced eye, be it of greenkeeper or agronomist, knows anyway?

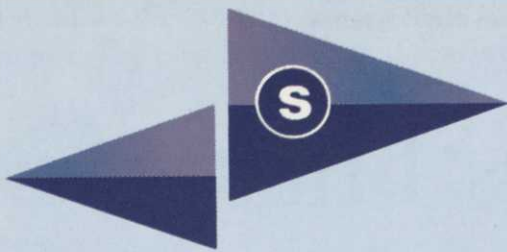
I would be the first to admit that many trials could be faulted for sloppy techniques or on technical foundations. STRI trials and others were not with conventional root zones but with sand-only and it is fully accepted that such sterile root zones need not only NPK but lime and even trace elements, but these are quite atypical. Nevertheless there are trials (and I have read them in detail) where the link is proven, but even if this were not true, then hundreds of experienced head men and advisers have first hand experience of the invasion of annual meadow grass into fine bent or fescue turf as a result of one incautious dose of complete fertiliser.

We are told that most soils contain too much phosphate even in agricultural work. Precisely! So why apply more, wasting money and producing negative results. There are many excellent examples of bent/fescue greens with soil analyses showing 3 ppm of phosphates and hundreds of very bad overfed annual meadow grass greens with levels of around 1,000 ppm, as proven by surveys reported by STRI (reference Hayes, Arthur: 'Greenkeeper' July 1986).

deductions need to be challenged.

The basis of greenkeeping over the past century or longer, that phosphatic fertilisers (as opposed to phosphates in non-

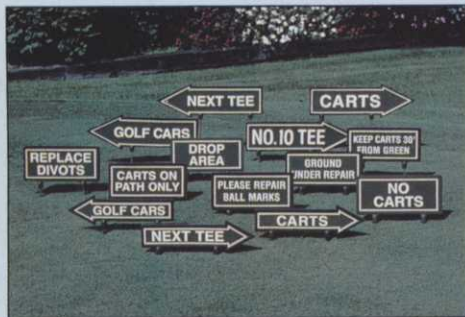
fertiliser form) encourage annual meadow grass invasion, is questioned. Yet this was the basis of the acid theory of the twenties (on which STRI was formed as the Board of Greenkeeping



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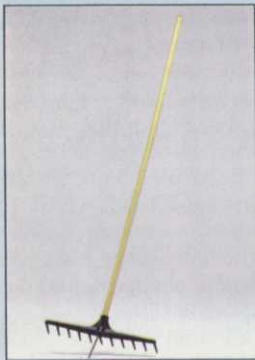
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# 'It is perhaps healthy that the basics of our profession should be examined and indeed modified if the need is proven beyond doubt'

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It is admitted that applying phosphates on alkaline soils will bring in annual meadow grass, but today most root zones are on the alkaline side of neutral. Acid soils lock up fertiliser phosphate – which was the basis of the old acid theory – so on both counts it is at best wasteful to apply phosphates in fertiliser form. Most top dressings today contain quite enough phosphate to meet the very modest nutritional needs of fine turf.

It is perhaps healthy that the very basics of our profession should be examined and indeed modified if the need is proven beyond doubt. We have to accept that modern pressures on golf courses make old techniques impracticable, but this does not mean that the principles are wrong and one can but deplore the current tendency to dismiss all the practical experience and countless examples which prove our basic beliefs in favour of some modern gimmicky analytical approach which means nothing. What does it profit us to know what the levels of certain plant foods are in soil or vegetation, when there is little that we can do to reduce levels that are too high. Hence my fairly jaundiced view on the value of chemical (not physical!) analyses and my comment that, "The ideal pH is the one you have got – since it is hard to reduce it on greens". The real danger of these heresies is not to experienced men but to

students and starters who may be encouraged to reject proven truths – they should listen to the advice that I received when I first joined Bingley immediately after the war. "We have made many mistakes in the past and you will be no exception, but for goodness sake do not copy the ones we have already made!"

J H Arthur BSc (Agric)

## My ideas on moving forward

I propose a building fund be adopted and all monies raised go directly to purchasing a building solely for BIGGA office use. I envisage two ways in which capital could be raised:

- 1 A £10 levy on all members on top of their annual subscription.
- 2 Life Membership to be made available for a maximum of 100 members. The figure of £1,000 per person for this scheme appears favourable.

I suggest we do away with 'gimmicks' for membership – such items as the wallet and pen. These items cost money, and I am sure we could manage without them. The sticker 'A Cut Above the Rest' is a way of advertising BIGGA, but I personally do not believe in cheap advertising.

I do hope you find the above suggestions useful and that they may raise a discussion at your next meeting.

Anthony Davies